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183.5. Youth Crime and Social Factors in the Netherlands

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In this study, we formulated the following question, “Is this the case? And if not, what is going on in youth crime?”

Is there a disconcerting increase in youth crime, particularly in the Netherlands? What connection is there with upbringing, related problems, and possible shifts in this area? Research (Loeber & Farrington, 1997, Loeber & Slot, 2002) has shown that members of the ‘hard core’ of youth crime were causing problems beginning at very young ages. Prevention is therefore aimed at early support in upbringing. Problems in upbringing and the family situation, however, only partly explain the development of youth crime. Moreover, in the case of today’s juvenile delinquents, the harm has already been done and the parents’ influence is often very small, if not non-existent.

What other factors influence the development of youth crime, and particularly, what role does the peer group play?

How can juvenile delinquents be assisted with effective treatment?

We used the ‘*hermeneutic, qualitative method*’ for this study, which means that by describing and interpreting current notions and practical material, we can reach an *understanding* of the phenomenon. We studied literature on youth culture, upbringing, and both individual and group youth crime. We confronted these partial studies and contrasted the given conclusions with descriptions of real-life cases. We have tried to make the lives of the offender, victim, and social worker understandable.

The results will be discussed. Tackling group psychopathology would involve close cooperation of the law with the police, education, welfare work, and mental health care. We also recommend developing and applying the notion of ‘performance’ as experience of young criminals.